

POLICY: Blood Borne Pathogens (Virus)

Policy area: Graduate Orthodontics & Dentofacial Orthopaedics	Policy number: GO 1.0
Responsible committee: Postgraduate Dental Education Committee	Page numbers: 1-5
Effective date: May 8, 2024	
Approval date: May 8, 2024	Approved by: Executive Committee
Approval date: N/A	Approved by: Dentistry Council
Approval date: N/A	Approved by: Joint Schulich Council/ECSC
Date of last Review: December 17, 2025	Date of next scheduled review: April 2027
Related policy:	
1. Immunizations and Other Clearance Requirements Policy	

1. PURPOSE

The Graduate Orthodontics & Dentofacial Orthopaedics Program at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University supports a safe learning environment in collaboration with the school's affiliated health care institutions. This statement outlines the process for managing risks related to blood borne pathogens in clinical training.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all applicants and dental students undertaking clinical learning within Schulich Dentistry and to the Expert Panel responsible for decision-making following a failed test.

3. DEFINITIONS

Blood borne pathogens (virus): A microbiologic agent capable of being transmitted to another person via contact with the blood of an infected individual. Most notably, in Canada, this includes the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and hepatitis C virus (HCV). <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/blood-borne-infections>

Expert panel: A panel consisting of faculty who have expert knowledge in the field of blood borne pathogens and that fulfills the functions outlined in this policy.

Exposure-prone procedures (EPP): Invasive procedures where there is the potential for direct transmission of virus between the learner through an accidental needle stick injury (usually a hand, finger or thumb) of the learner via a sharp instrument, needle tip, or sharp tissue (spicules

of bone or teeth) while delivering patient care in body cavities, wounds, or in poorly visualized, confined anatomical sites during surgical or assessment procedures.

Non-exposure prone procedures (NEPP): The procedures where the hands and fingers of the learner are visible and outside of the body always and there is no active bleeding by the patient and/or procedures/examinations that do not involve risk of possible injury to the learners' hands by sharp instruments and/or tissues. This is with the overall proviso that routine universal infection prevention and control procedures are adhered to always. (For example, routine oral examinations)

Routine practices and additional preconditions: The Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee's Document as well as Best Practices in Infection and Control as amended and updated from time to time: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Infection-Prevention-Control/Best-Practices-IPAC>

4. PROCESS

4.1 Applicants

Applicants once accepted will be:

- 4.1.1 Required to participate in the care of patients with various communicable diseases or infections including blood borne disease;
- 4.1.2 Required to comply with the program's Immunization and Other Clearance Requirements policy; and
- 4.1.3 Ethically responsible, upon acceptance, inform the Learner Experience Office (LEO) if they are positive for a blood borne virus. The Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry and/or LEO may consult with the Expert Panel or other experts as appropriate. Confidentiality of the applicant's state of health will be maintained to the greatest extent possible.

4.2 Learners' obligations

Learners must:

- 4.2.1 Know their serological status with respect to blood borne viruses;
- 4.2.2 Be in a state of health such that they may participate in the academic programs, including patient care, without posing a risk to themselves, or others, including patients;
- 4.2.3 Comply with this policy; and the program's Immunizations and Other Clearance Requirements Policy;
- 4.2.4 Comply with the Provincial Communicable Diseases Surveillance Protocol, Blood-Borne Diseases Surveillance Protocol for Ontario Hospitals, developed under the Public Hospitals Act, Regulation 965;
- 4.2.5 Use routine practices and additional precautions in order to prevent the spread of blood borne infections and other infections;
- 4.2.6 Declare by posted deadlines to LEO prior to enrollment in the program and before any involvement with the clinical care of patients their personal antibody status for Hepatitis

- C and HIV;
- 4.2.7 If Hepatitis B surface antibody negative, declare to LEO their Hepatitis B surface antigen and core antibody status; and
- 4.2.8 Prior to participating in any clinical learning experience, be Hepatitis B immune, if known to be Hepatitis B surface antigen negative. If a learner is persistently antigen negative despite recurrent vaccine, the matter will be reviewed by the Expert Panel.

4.3 Learners infected with a blood borne disease

Learners infected with a blood borne disease have the following obligations:

- 4.3.1 Inform LEO within 72 hours if they are or test positive for a transmissible blood borne illness. If a positive antibody was detected, declare the most recent respective Hepatitis C or HIV viral load to LEO;
- 4.3.2 Meet with LEO within the week to determine whether a leave of absence and/or an accommodated learning plan is required;
- 4.3.3 Only pursue their studies if their continued involvement does not pose a health or safety hazard to themselves or others, including patients;
- 4.3.4 Have their condition reviewed and monitored by the Expert Panel at the request of the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry and Assistant Dean (Dentistry), LEO;
- 4.3.5 Submit documentation to the Expert Panel as reasonably required for it to understand the health status of the learner and to develop an accommodated learning plan;
- 4.3.6 Comply with an accommodated learning plan, as developed by the Expert Panel and approved by the Vice-Dean and Director of Dentistry;
- 4.3.7 The Assistant Dean (Dentistry), LEO will annually review all learners with a positive test for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or HIV;
- 4.3.8 Submit documentation to LEO of ongoing adherence to treatment annually, in cases of learners with HIV, Hepatitis B or C and a viral load who are on chronic antiretroviral therapy;
- 4.3.9 Disclose to the Associate Director, Clinics or Manager, of Clinic Operations immediately if they accidentally expose a patient to their blood borne disease in a clinical setting;
- 4.3.10 Failure to comply with the above obligations may result in dismissal from the program for patient safety reasons.

4.4 Learners at high risk

Learners with certain medical conditions that place them at a higher risk of complications if they are exposed to a blood borne virus may:

- 4.4.1 Inform LEO of their medical condition;
- 4.4.2 Submit documentation to the Expert Panel as reasonably required for it to understand the health status of the learner and to develop an accommodated learning plan if appropriate;
- 4.4.3 Comply with an accommodated learning plan, as developed by the Expert Panel and approved by the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry;
- 4.4.4 Learners who seek accommodation under this section because of their vaccination status must take immediate steps to come into compliance with Schulich School of

Medicine & Dentistry policies regarding immunizations.

4.5 Learners who are potentially exposed to a blood borne illness

Learners who are potentially exposed to a blood borne illness have the following obligations:

- 4.5.1 Seek medical attention as soon as possible after the event;
- 4.5.2 Report and document the occurrence to LEO as soon as possible; and
- 4.5.3 Follow post-occurrence testing and treatment as required by the Expert Panel and Assistant Dean (Dentistry), LEO.

Procedures to be followed in the event of workplace injury:

https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/learner_experience/docs/wellness_resources/Policy-for-Students-Who-Receive-Percutaneous-Injuries-in-aNon-Hospital-Setting-2013.pdf

4.6 Schulich Dentistry's obligations

The school will:

- 4.6.1 Maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent possible regarding any information disclosed by students concerning their serological status and disclose relevant information only with the appropriate consent;
- 4.6.2 Ensure there is a timely response to and from all parties involved;
- 4.6.3 Ensure there is communication from LEO to the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry on learners requiring accommodated learning plans for blood borne pathogens;
- 4.6.4 Provide education and training to all learners in appropriate methods to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases, including blood borne diseases, for EPP and NEPP that are consistent with routine practices and additional precautions;
- 4.6.5 Require all undergraduate learners who are Hepatitis B antibody and antigen negative and Hepatitis C and HIV serology negative to undertake and report repeat serology testing to LEO prior to entering any clinical learning;
- 4.6.6 Create an accommodated learning plan for a learner who tests positive for a blood borne virus that respects and maintains the privacy of the learner but supports patient safety. This accommodated learning plan will be generated collaboratively involving input from the learner, the school and the Expert Panel;
- 4.6.7 Provide education and training to a learner who tests positive for carriage of a blood borne virus on appropriate methods to prevent transmission of blood borne diseases to patients and others;
- 4.6.8 Provide the accommodated learning plan to the learner's supervisor and educate the supervisor so that they understand the plan and how it should be implemented;
- 4.6.9 Provide support for clinical instructors in meeting a learner's accommodated learning plan for EPP;
- 4.6.10 Monitor learner compliance with the accommodated learning plan for EPP;
- 4.6.11 Advise the Associate Director, Clinics and Manager, Clinic Operations of the EPP accommodations required for the learner;
- 4.6.12 Report to Associate Director, Clinics and Manager, Clinic Operations any issues arising that suggest non-compliance with the accommodated plan and any proposed investigation and necessary action;

- 4.6.13 Form an Expert Panel created with faculty who have expert knowledge in the field of blood borne viruses and review such membership periodically.

4.7 Expert Panel

The Expert Panel will:

- 4.7.1 Meet for the sole purpose of advising LEO and the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry, on learner accommodations necessary for individual clinical curriculum when a learner is found to be antigen positive for a viral pathogen listed as follows: Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV;
- 4.7.2 Be convened at the request of the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry or Assistant Dean (Dentistry), LEO;
- 4.7.3 Include individuals who have expertise in the identified learner's curriculum; infection prevention and control; infectious diseases; hematology and/or hepatology (with expertise in viral hepatitis and/or HIV infection); public health; bioethics; occupational medicine; hospital administration; and/or legal expertise;
- 4.7.4 Allow a learner under review to make such submissions to the Expert Panel and to appear before the Expert Panel prior to the panel making its recommendation to the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry;
- 4.7.5 Review, adjudicate and make recommendations on matters referred to it;
- 4.7.6 Develop and advise on an accommodated learning plan for a learner with a blood borne disease and recommend same to the Learner and the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry;
- 4.7.7 Communicate the personal health information of a learner to school leaders and faculty on a need-to-know basis.

4.8. Vice-Dean and Director of Dentistry

The Vice-Dean and Director of Dentistry will make the decision on the appropriate accommodated learning plan for a particular learner following receipt of recommendations from the Expert Panel. The learner shall be afforded the opportunity to meet with the Vice Dean and Director of Dentistry and to submit documentation for consideration within the deadlines set by the Vice Dean and Director. In making such a decision, the Vice Dean and Director may consult a third-party expert to review and deliver an opinion on the accommodated learning plan developed by the Expert Panel. Such an opinion may be used by the Vice Dean and Director in altering or upholding the plan recommended by the Expert Panel.